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RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF ESTABLISHING BALANCED ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROLS ON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of private higher education in Kenya emerged and accelerated in the 1990s. Currently there are 36 private universities. Despite this growth, private universities are largely seen as ineffective due to weak leadership practices. Also, existing research on leadership in private universities has scanty literature relating to effective strategic leadership practices and organizational effectiveness constructs. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the impact of establishing balanced organizational controls, as a practice of effective strategic leadership, on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. The study was underpinned by strategic leadership theory and adopted positivism philosophy. The design was quantitative descriptive research using a cross-sectional survey. The target population was 1733 individuals in top management/leadership positions from all 36 private universities in Kenya consisting of board of trustees/directors, members of the university governing council, university management board, and university senate/academic board/academic council, other senior academic leaders, other senior administrative leaders, and student leaders, from which a sample size of 325 was determined using the Yamane formula. Data was collected using a structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 29) software. Pseudo R-square (Nagelkerke R^2=0.49) indicated that balanced organizational controls explain 49% of variance in organizational effectiveness. Parameter estimates (ß=2.405, p<0.001) showed that balanced organizational controls have a significant positive effect on organizational effectiveness. The study determined that establishing balanced organizational controls has significant impact on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. Based on these findings it is recommended that the leadership of private universities strengthen control mechanisms for better regulation of behaviors and alignment of processes, systems, and organizational action towards achievement of effectiveness. Specifically, feedback controls systems should be reevaluated to develop proper mechanisms to promote a culture of continuous feedback and assessment to identify and address operational inefficiencies as well as enhance employee motivation and commitment to performance objectives.

Keywords: Balanced Organizational Controls, Organizational Effectiveness, Private Universities, Strategic Leadership

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, strategic leadership has piqued the interest of individuals and organizations, including private universities, due to environmental turbulence (Al Haddad & Al Shobaki, 2021). Most notably, the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated emphasis on the role and importance of strategic leadership in helping organizations to remain financially and operationally sustainable (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Tipurić (2022) defines strategic leadership as the capacity to manage intricate situations and adds that it is critical for effective and efficient deployment of resources as well as enabling and directing learning, strategic thinking, and change in an organization so that it is effectively equipped to confront challenges and adapt in changing business environments.

Johnson-Kanda and Yawson (2018) posited that while environmental turbulence is not new, the unfolding events in the present context of globalization are unprecedented and require innovative solutions. Thus, the leadership role is experiencing a fundamental shift to refocus capabilities on dealing with the various emerging issues (Mäkelä et al., 2020). Leaders have to embrace a wider scope of responsibility in tandem with the rate and pace of change and effectively manage the evolving organizational complexities such as diverse workforces, technological innovation and advancement, among others. In these circumstances, leaders must, among other attributes and capabilities, be strategically agile and business-savvy, entrepreneurial, exercise integrity, and be ethical decision-makers and problem-solvers (Northeastern University, 2022). All these attributes fit within the scope of strategic leadership, making it more relevant now than before (Tipurić, 2022). As markets become global and competition intensifies, the biggest challenge for organizations remains the ability to adopt effective strategic leadership to devise strategic approaches for managing the present complexities and to navigate the uncertain and changing environments in ways that effectiveness can be achieved and sustained.

Hitt et al. (2017) outlined various key practices of effective strategic leadership which if adopted enable organizations to achieve effectiveness in evolving and changing environments. Establishing balanced organizational controls is one of these practices. Balanced organizational controls, comprising strategic, financial, and feedback controls, are a mechanism that organizations utilize to evaluate how they are progressing in terms of achieving their goals and objectives (Oluoch et al., 2021). Strategic controls emphasize action and are realized through information exchange between leadership, top management, and the employees (Slawinski, 2007). Financial controls seek to derive performance outcomes through objective criteria or measures (Hitt et al., 2017). Feedback controls provide guidance on appropriate action in relation to organizational plans (Sihag & Rijsdijk, 2019). Controls augment the organization's strategic direction and facilitate strategy implementation to achieve targeted objectives (Hitt et al., 2017). Good controls encompass the setting of objectives, monitoring organizational performance, and determining interventions for improving performance (Nkeobuna & Ugoani, 2021). Effective strategic leadership embraces and creates a healthy balance of these controls as a tool for stimulating innovativeness in employees through which competitive advantage and other organizational goals can be achieved (Adaileh & Adaileh, 2021).

Higher education is affected by increasing fraud due to lack of adequate internal controls that sufficiently consider risk (SafePaas, 2023). According to Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACPE) (2022) $3.6 million was reported in fraud affecting higher education and other businesses. Towett et al. (2019) stated that in university context, controls ensure transparency and efficiency through completion and accuracy of records to inhibit fraud and other malpractices for improved performance. Clearly outlined and defined controls provide a favorable environment for employees to manage their tasks thus execution of roles becomes easy. Appropriate risk management strategies are critical for providing a sense of confidence in the organization's ability to manage risk. Strong risk management mechanisms ensure that impending risk is detectable well in advance, and this leads to reducing the potential for loss of income and other returns. A report by Deloitte and Blackline (2022) indicated that an organization's ability to identify material risks enables implementation of appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms resulting in effective internal controls. A controls gap analysis is critical in ensuring appropriate implementation of tasks so that the controls in place translate to value for the organization through effective design and operation.

It is further argued that universities do not effectively analyze the effectiveness of their controls, but focus only on testing them (SafePaas, 2023). Due to the intersection of procedures and processes in universities, internal controls are weakened, which makes management of the control environment a challenge. In Indonesia, for example, lack of internal controls has posed multiple challenges to private universities, the scale of impact being closure of more than 100 of them (Purba et al., 2022). Appropriate utilization of resources can help private universities to lower to controllable levels risks arising out of weak controls (Purba et al., 2022). According to Edwards (2014), output controls play a major role in universities in determining corrective actions for output-related shortfalls. Conversely, positive outputs may result in the development and implementation of reward systems to reinforce positive performance. Behavioral controls emphasize control of actions responsible for results. Aga (2023) established that behavioral controls effectively mediated entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions among Ethiopian university students, which would enable them to nurture entrepreneurship post-graduation.

In Kenya, the private university system has grown significantly, having emerged and accelerated in the 1990s (Kibuine et al., 2022). Currently, there are 36 private universities, but despite this growth, these institutions are seen as hubs of poor performance, producing low-quality graduates (Yegon, 2020). Rubera (2023) argued that poor leadership practices are rampant and contribute to the myriad of problems faced by Kenyan universities. Along with leadership gaps, private universities in Kenya are unable to effectively circumvent threats or tap into emerging opportunities (Kimutai & Kwambai, 2018). Kiriri (2022) also expressed concerns about the declining standards of training in universities due to internal and external challenges. He stated that the effectiveness of organizational controls should be measured using the balanced score card, arguing that its use in the management of universities enables formulation of structures necessary to gauge their effectiveness. In this turbulent environment, private universities must be strategic in their choice of tools to evolve their strategies into practical solutions by enabling optimization in resource utilization to achieve strategic objectives. An effective balanced organizational controls mechanism ensures effectiveness of plans, consistency of organizational activities, organizational efficiency, feedback to the stakeholders, decision-making, and organizational effectiveness (Dědečková, 2020).

Avedi and Anyieni (2023) argue that organizational effectiveness is essential for the survival of Kenyan private universities as they operate in an intensely competitive environment. Therefore, they need to embed a differentiated leadership approach to measuring performance with the goal of achieving effectiveness for long term survival. Effective strategic leadership practices provide requisite capabilities to formulate and implement suitable strategies towards this goal (Al Haddad & Al Shobaki, 2021). Aggarwal (2022) found that in the USA, private universities need effective leadership to confront challenges unique to them by embedding appropriate practices and utilizing strategies that enable them to respond to environmental pressures. Aggarwal emphasized adoption of strategic leadership practices for sustainable competitive advantage. Al Saati (2020) also established that strategic leadership has a positive effect on creativity in private universities in United Arab Emirates. Strategic leadership's ability to embed strategic insights can translate innovative creativity into a determinant of success. De-Graft et al. (2023) argued that Ghanaian private universities can turn around their low performance by deploying differentiated strategies to manage student enrolment, regain their market position, and become competitive. In Malawian private universities, leadership failures in implementing appropriate strategies have led to poor performance and other challenges. The leadership of these institutions would need to re-strategize to reverse these outcomes (Kajawo, 2019). And in Kenya, Nyongesa et al. (2022) argued that adoption of strategic leadership practices in universities needs to be enhanced so that management of these institutions is improved for better quality outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Al Haddad and Al Shobaki (2021) asserted that private universities that adopt strategic leadership practices can realize their corporate objectives and survive in these dynamic environments, thereby achieving effectiveness. This assertion, however, conflicts with reality across geographies. Private universities are largely seen as ineffective due to the many challenges they face, which are attributed to weak leadership practices (Rubera, 2023). Studies such as Mungathia (2018) and Mulwa et al. (2019) show that strategic leadership practices have indeed been adopted in Kenyan private universities. However, they have not been practiced effectively. There is concern that leaders are not appropriately trained or orientated to the work of strategic leadership. It has also been observed that empirical research on leadership in private universities is diverse, but focus has been on performance and other variables, with scanty literature relating to effective strategic leadership practices and organizational effectiveness constructs. Further, the prevailing and seemingly unending narrative of environmental turbulence, ongoing change, and survival in the context of private universities warrants evaluation of effective strategic leadership practices and effectiveness in these institutions. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the impact of establishing balanced organizational controls on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya.

Research question

This study was based on the following research question:

What is the impact of establishing balanced organizational controls on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was stated as follows:

H_0: Establishing balanced organizational controls does not have a significant impact on organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Strategic leadership theory evolved from Hambrick and Mason's (1984) upper echelons theory whose view was that the strategic choices an organization adopts result from top management's assessment of the environment based on their inclinations, ideals, experience, and knowledge. Ireland, and Hitt (1999) added to the theory by arguing that the 21st century strategic leadership role would fundamentally shift from position and designation to that of increased responsibility and accountability to multiple stakeholders, and, therefore, strategic leaders would need to devise and spearhead a collective approach to managing organizational issues. Tipurić (2022) views strategic leadership's collective approach as distributed strategic leadership which enables depersonalization, allows participation, joint action, and collective decision-making. Further, strategic leadership's flexibility enables it to be reconfigured according to institutional dynamics to encompass the breadth and width of responsibilities and effective involvement of all stakeholders for positive outcomes. Boal and Hooijberg (2001) built upon Ireland and Hitt's (1999) group perspective by adding contextual and environmental factors as crucial antecedents of strategic leadership action. Further contributions came from Hitt et al. (2017) who asserted that effective strategic leadership is an outcome of certain specific actions, based on the viability of options that the leaders generate when they are making decisions for those specific actions. These actions include determining strategic direction, effectively managing the firm's resource portfolio, sustaining an effective organizational culture, emphasizing ethical practices, and establishing balanced organizational controls.

Empirical review

Adaileh and Adaileh (2021) investigated the impact of strategic leadership practices on organizational learning in South Jordanian public universities. The study found that balanced organizational controls were positively and strongly correlated with organizational learning. The authors recommended and emphasized the need to promote balanced organizational controls in universities to enhance organizational learning. Mukakibibi and Rusibana's (2020) study of 171 employees of Rwanda Broadcasting Corporation found that financial controls were positively associated with organizational performance. The implications of the study were that for organizational performance to improve, financial controls must be strengthened. At the organizational level, top management must enable strengthening of feedback mechanisms to provide an environment where openness thrives. Various other studies have reported mixed findings in relation to the effect of controls on organizational performance as indicated by Sihag and Rijsdijk (2019). In their meta-analytic assessment of behavior, Sihag and Rijsdijk argued that outcome and clan controls within organizations indicate that all these controls are critical and emphasis on them should be consistent intra-organizationally. However, while outcome and clan controls can consistently produce similar outputs, behavior controls are more dependent on the type of task which will determine the level of effectiveness as they are less effective in some tasks than in others and, therefore, cannot uniformly generate similar results. In this case managers must consider the tasks at hand to determine whether the behavior control will enable the employee to produce the desired outcomes. Sihag and Rijsdijk concluded that application of the different controls generates distinctive synergies that overcome the shortcomings of individuals controls, therefore, reinforcing systems and processes for greater performance.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was as indicated in Figure 1.

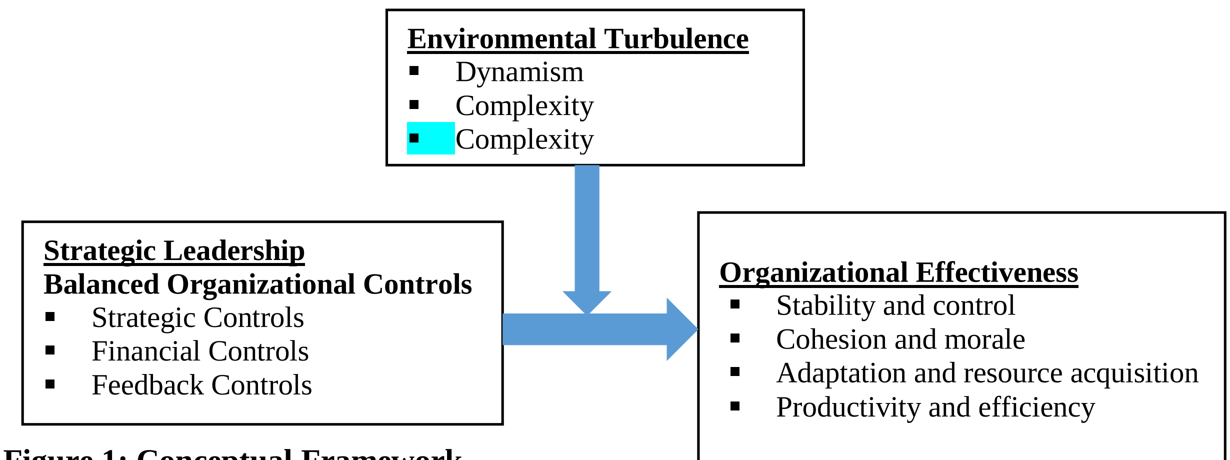

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study was underpinned by strategic leadership theory and adopted the positivism philosophy. The design for the study was quantitative descriptive research using cross-sectional survey approach. The target population was 1733 individuals in top management/leadership positions from all 36 private universities in Kenya, comprising board of trustees/directors, university governing council, university management board, university senate/academic board/academic council, other senior academic and administrative leaders, and student leaders. Probability sampling with stratification was applied. A sample size of 325 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula. Of the 325 respondents, 32 (10%) participated in the pilot study. Therefore, this study had 293 respondents. Data was collected using a structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire which was self-administered and also shared online through a google link. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 29. Inferential statistics were analyzed using correlation, Chi-square test, ANOVA, and ordinal logistic regression.

RESULTS

Response rate

A response rate of 93% was achieved as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Response Rate

No. of questionnaires	No. of questionnaires	Response rate (%)
293	273	93

A. Inferential Statistics for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis

Results (r=0.710, p<.001) indicated that balanced organizational controls are positively and strongly correlated with organizational effectiveness. Thus, improvements in balanced organizational controls are associated with increased effectiveness in private universities. The results strongly support implementation of effective control mechanisms as drivers for organizational effectiveness. This finding reinforces the need for strategic leadership to effectively establish and promote balanced organizational controls to optimize achievement of organizational outcomes. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Correlations

		Organizational Effectiveness	**Balance Organizational Control**
Organizational Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	**.710****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		**.000**
	N	273	**272**
Balance Organizational Control	Pearson Correlation	.710**	**1**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	272	**272**

****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Chi-Square Test

Results (χ^2=169.281, df=9, p<0.001) indicated that there is statistically significant association between balanced organizational controls and organizational effectiveness. The likelihood ratio test and linear-by-linear association test were also significant, further supporting this relationship. The strong significance levels indicated that establishing balanced organizational controls is a crucial factor in achieving organizational effectiveness. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	169.281[a]	9	**.000**
Likelihood Ratio	154.081	9	**.000**
Linear-by-Linear Association	115.366	1	**.000**
N of Valid Cases	268		

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .12.

Diagnostic tests

The following tests were done to ensure that the regression model met the requirements.

Normality Test

This test was conducted to check the assumption that data was normally distributed. Results indicated that both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were significant ($p<0.001$), suggesting that the data did not follow a normal distribution. The deviation from normality implied that non-parametric methods or transformations would be necessary for further statistical analyses. Despite the lack of normality, the large sample size (n=268) likely minimized its impact on the validity of inferential tests. However, as this study employed ordinal logistic regression, inferential testing relied on the proportional odds assumption which ensured that conclusions drawn from regression analysis remained valid. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Normality Test Results

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			**Shapiro-Wilk**		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	**Sig.**
Organizational Effectiveness	.279	268	.000	.806	268	**.000**
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Multicollinearity Test
Test results showed that the tolerance value was 1.000 and the variance inflation factor (VIF) was also 1.000, indicating no multicollinearity between balanced organizational controls and organizational effectiveness. This finding suggested that the predictor variable (balanced organizational controls) was independent and would not cause redundancy in the regression model. As the multicollinearity assumption was not violated, the regression analysis proceeded with the confidence that establishing balanced organizational controls is a distinct and valid predictor of organizational effectiveness. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5: Multicollinearity Results

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	**Collinearity Statistics**	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	**VIF**
1	(Constant)	1.586	.180		8.808	.000		
	Balanced Organizational Controls2	.617	.043	.657	14.226	.000	1.000	**1.000**
a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness								

Model Fitting Information

Model Summary
The model fitting information result was significant (χ^2=149.619, df=1, p<0.001), indicating that balanced organizational controls have a strong effect on organizational effectiveness. The final model (-2 Log Likelihood = 32.440) showed a substantial improvement over the intercept-only model. These findings confirmed that balanced organizational controls significantly predict organizational effectiveness in private universities. The strong significance level (p<0.001) further reinforced the validity of this relationship. Table 6 shows the results.

Table 6: Model Fit Summary Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Model Fitting Information				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	**Sig.**
Intercept Only	182.058			
Final	32.440	149.619	1	**.000**
Link function: Logit.				

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
One-Way ANOVA test results (F=67.798, p<0.001) showed a significant difference in organizational effectiveness based on balanced organizational controls groups. However, between-group variance (SS = 55.641) was notably smaller than within-group variance (SS = 72.221), suggesting that differences in organizational effectiveness are not very strongly attributed to balanced organizational controls alone; rather, there is potential influence of other internal or contextual factors. These results indicated the existence of not very strong controls frameworks in private universities which on their own cannot optimally support effectiveness goals. This highlights the need for strategic leaders of private universities to critically analyze their individual institutional contexts and redefine and reinforce their controls to augment their operations for better outcomes. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

ANOVA					
Organizational Effectiveness					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	**Sig.**
Between Groups	55.641	3	18.547	67.798	**.000**
Within Groups	72.221	264	.274		
Total	127.862	267			

Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis: Proportional Odds Assumption (Test of Parallel Lines)
The test for parallel line result was not significant with -2 Log Likelihood of 32.440 (χ^2=3.040, df=2, p=0.219) indicating no violation. This finding suggested that the relationship between

balanced organizational controls and organizational effectiveness remained consistent across response categories. Since the assumption was met, the stability of the predictor variable's influence was confirmed, and the ordinal logistic regression model was used confidently to analyze the impact of balanced organizational controls on organizational effectiveness. Table 8 shows the results.

Table 8: Proportional Odds Assumption Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Test of Parallel Lines[a]

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	**Sig.**
Null Hypothesis	32.440			
General	29.400	3.040	2	**.219**

a. Link function: Logit.

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

Pseudo R-square Test

The Pseudo R-square values indicated that balanced organizational controls explain a significant proportion of the variance in organizational effectiveness. Cox and Snell's R^2 was 0.428, Nagelkerke's R^2 was 0.491, and McFadden's R^2 was 0.272, suggesting a moderately strong relationship between balanced organizational controls and organizational effectiveness, and confirming that establishing balanced organizational controls is an important predictor. Nagelkerke Pseudo R-square R^2=0.491 indicated that 49% variability in organizational effectiveness is accounted for by establishing balanced organizational controls and 51% by other factors not included in the study. Table 9 shows the results.

Table 9: Pseudo R-Square Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	**.428**
Nagelkerke	**.491**
McFadden	**.272**

Link function: Logit.

Parameter Estimates Test

The parameter estimates showed that balanced organizational controls have a significant positive effect on organizational effectiveness. The coefficient for balanced organizational controls was

2.405 ($p<0.001$), indicating that as establishing balanced organizational controls improves, organizational effectiveness increases significantly. The confidence interval for balanced organizational controls (1.962 to 2.849) further confirmed the reliability of this effect. These findings highlighted the importance of the strategic leadership practice of establishing balanced organizational controls in enhancing the effectiveness of private universities. Table 10 shows the results.

Table 10: Parameter Estimates Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Parameter Estimates								
		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	**95% Confidence Interval**	
							Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**
Threshold	[Organizational Effectiveness= 2.00]	3.886	.832	21.830	1	.000	2.256	**5.517**
	[Organizational Effectiveness= 3.00]	7.343	.839	76.668	1	.000	5.699	**8.987**
	[Organizational Effectiveness = 4.00]	11.269	1.008	124.897	1	.000	9.293	**13.245**
Location	Balanced Organizational Controls	2.405	.226	113.031	1	.000	1.962	**2.849**

Testing Hypothesis: Goodness of Fit Test

Pearson Chi-square (χ^2=3.852, p=0.870) and Deviance (χ^2=6.756, p=0.239) statistics were not significant, suggesting that the model fit the data well. These findings indicated that the logistic regression model appropriately explained the relationship between balanced organizational controls and organizational effectiveness. Since both tests showed a good fit, the model's assumptions were satisfied, ensuring the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the regression analysis. This further strengthened the case for establishing balanced organizational controls as one of the key determinants of organizational effectiveness in private universities. Table 11 shows the results.

Table 11: Goodness of Fit Results for Balanced Organizational Controls and Organizational Effectiveness

Goodness-of-Fit			
	Chi-Square	df	**Sig.**
Pearson	3.852	8	**.870**
Deviance	4.463	8	**.813**
Link function: Logit.			

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study are in line with literature. Overall, results indicated that balanced organizational controls positively impact organizational effectiveness in private universities in Kenya. The strong positive correlation between balanced organizational controls and organizational effectiveness is similar to results achieved by Orishede et al. **(**2021) who established that control strategies are positively correlated with organizational effectiveness. The authors argued that it is essential to ensure that appropriate controls and coordination for different organizational functions are in place to achieve effectiveness. Lee et al. (2021) determined that efficient control processes led to accomplishment of organizational goals and governance objectives in Chinese and Korean information technology companies. Rauter et al. (2023) found that formal controls are correlated with sustainability innovation performance. Formal controls provide a clear guide on the goals and outcomes to be pursued by the organization and the processes to bring these to fruition. Controls enhance coordination among organizational members, thereby reducing asymmetries in processes. Sihag and Rijsdijk (2019) argued for the complementarity of organizational controls and performance outcomes. However different controls associate with different outcomes, and further, the effectiveness of controls is not affected by type of performance outcome, level of analysis, or institutional setting. A contrary outcome was by Oluoch et al. (2021) who found no correlation between controls and non-governmental organizations sustainability in Kenya. However, a later study by Odhiambo and Maende (2023) found that in the humanitarian non-governmental organizations, internal controls positively correlate with resource mobilization.

This study also found that balanced organizational controls have a statistically significant association with organizational effectiveness. Similar results were found by Onduso et al. (2024)

who established that organizational controls positively associated with performance in Kisii and Kakamega counties. Yanti et al. (2024) in their study of MSMEs in Karawang Regence Indonesia determined that improved management of control mechanisms leads to better performance by employees. The authors stated that implementation of effective management control systems accelerates employee performance. Adejuwon and Hassan (2022) also found that internal controls have a strong positive association with different non-financial performance indicators of internal process, customers' perspective, and learning/innovation perspectives, in selected banks in Nigeria. In the Singaporean context, Verburg et al. (2018) established that clear and regular controls positively impact employee organizational trust which translates to improved task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that controls enhance trust in the organization which results in positive outcomes. Coelho et al. (2020) argued that controls mechanisms ought to be augmented by management orientation to effectively impact employee creativity. This argument aligns with this study's finding that balanced organizational controls on their own do not strongly impact organizational effectiveness but that other internal or contextual factors play a role.

Results indicated that strategic controls positively impact organizational effectiveness. This concurs with Harahsheh and Abuhashish (2023) who found a positive relationship between strategic controls and organizational performance in the Jordanian Islamic Bank. Strategic organizational controls also positively impact human capital development as determined by Batasi and Okello (2019). It is important to ensure that controls are accurately communicated to relevant departmental teams so that they are effectively monitored for compliance. Bore and Irungu (2022) established that strategic controls are positively and strongly correlated with financial sustainability of faith-based organizations. The authors underscored alert, premise, implementation, and monitoring controls as critical elements of organizational controls that enhance the financial health of faith-based organizations. On the contrary, Diar et al. (2017) found that premise controls, which are tools that strategic leadership uses to monitor assumptions on which strategic plans are based, negatively influence organizational performance. This outcome could be attributed to among other things, misalignment between the controls framework and the business strategy as argued by Barrachina-Palanca et al. (2023). Premise controls are an important part of the strategic controls framework as they enable identification of gaps in the strategic plans thus guiding corrective action to ensure plans progress as expected (Nassanga & Mandere, 2023).

Results of the study showed that financial controls have a positive effect on organizational effectiveness. Similar results were found by Towett et al. (2019) who established that financial controls have a positive effect on income generating units in public universities. They underscored the significance of regular checks and reviews, as well implementing relevant modifications to facilitate effective integration of financial controls mechanisms. Makamache and Chikwature (2020) emphasized the importance of financial controls for organizational survival. The authors found that financial controls are positively associated with operational performance and financial growth. Chepkurui et al. (2022) found a positive and significant relationship between financial controls and financial sustainability. Strong financial control mechanisms seal loopholes for misappropriation of financial resources which ensures that organizational performance targets are achieved (Dagane & Kihara, 2021).

This study also confirmed that feedback controls have a positive effect on organizational performance. This outcome coincides with that of Meutia and Bukhori (2017) who found that feedback controls positively impacted organizational learning in Indonesian SMEs. Nikolić et al. (2020) argued that when appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place, they mobilize employees and other stakeholders in the right direction and ultimately dictate their behaviors. It is essential for employees to be made aware of their performance relative to set key performance indicators and for leadership to augment performance with rewards in order to emphasize positive behavior. Employees should have a platform to give feedback and share views on their work and will appreciate timely feedback on their outputs. In this regard, feedback anchors employee performance. Nikolić et al. concluded that feedback controls encourage elimination of ineffective behavior amongst employees and instead prompt them to identify appropriate behaviors that align with the organization's goals and desired outcomes. Feedback controls also boost employee productivity and empower them to address emerging challenges quickly and, through the reward system, expose them to development and growth opportunities. At the organizational level, top management must enable strengthening of feedback mechanisms to provide an environment where openness thrives. Drouvelis and Paiardini (2022) add support to the productivity argument stating that the quality of feedback to employees determines the level of their performance – higher quality feedback translates to better performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that establishing balanced organizational controls is an important practice of strategic leadership teams for the achievement of organizational effectiveness in private universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that leadership teams in private universities strengthen their control mechanisms to better regulate behavior, align processes, systems, and organizational action towards achievement of goals and objectives. Specifically, there is a need for the leadership teams to reevaluate the feedback controls systems and develop proper mechanisms to promote a culture of continuous feedback and assessment to identify and address operational inefficiencies as well as enhance employee motivation and commitment to performance objectives.

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